

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

In the senior and junior schools there are approximately 566 and 150 pupils respectively, of whom nearly 230 are boarders. The full age range is 3 to 18, and transfer from the junior to the senior school is at year 7. Recruitment is at all levels. The school is one of the most successful fully co-educational independent schools in the country with an overall gender mix close to 50:50

The school is internationally famous as a specialist music school - one of four in England within the Department of Education (DfE) Music and Dance Scheme. This involves some 170 students in intensive instrumental and related training – and many others in elite musicianship at every level. Each year about twelve DfE-aided places (there are 78 in the whole school) are awarded to pupils of outstanding musical ability; most of them have an individually adjusted academic timetable. Pupils become eligible for this scheme when they are eight years old. All the choristers of Wells Cathedral are pupils in the school, and they follow a specialist music programme as long as they are singing in the choir.

The curriculum at the Early Years Foundation Stage and across the junior school places great emphasis on the arts; art, dance, drama and music have a prominent place in school life. Throughout the whole school the co-curricular programme is rich and varied, and focused on the best all-round education for individual pupils. Drama, Dance, Theatre Studies and Art all flourish and are key elements of both the core and co-curriculum. Pioneering work has been done in partnership with other schools and colleges in the delivery of on-line learning. Mandarin was introduced in the senior school in September 2006, and the school's Mandarin teacher works with activities in the junior school also. Sport is also an important element in pupils' development. The emphasis in games is to develop pupils' individual interests and fitness while maintaining high standards in major games. Outdoor activities play an important part in the curriculum. A wide range of other activities is undertaken, aiming to broaden interests and to offer opportunities to every pupil. Almost 100% of upper sixth pupils leave for higher education courses; typically many each year go on to Oxford or Cambridge and other Russell Group universities, and many to music college or conservatoire.

The building programme of recent years has both introduced new buildings and developed old ones. Newly-built classrooms were completed for September 2006 and the outdoor pool has been converted to an indoor facility; a further classroom development was completed in March 2010. Our beautiful Georgian buildings are subject to a rolling programme of redecoration and refurbishment. The current site plan includes a major new music building and a sports pavilion, new maintenance buildings and improving play facilities.

About 12% of students across the whole school are from overseas and are recruited by word of mouth, by agencies specialising in this work or because of their musical talent.

The school is working with the Peak Performance Organisation to develop its purpose and all staff are involved in its development and direction, and is currently focusing on embedding internationalism throughout the school, both through its recruitment and in the way its education enables children to live and work across the world. Various international partnership and development programmes with schools abroad (currently China, Hong Kong, Sierra Leone, France, Germany and Sri Lanka give pupils and staff opportunities for excitement and enrichment. Educational focus is on creating an environment for independent learning.

The school is a Christian foundation which has existed since 909 AD to educate the choristers of Wells Cathedral as it still does today for both the boys' and the girls' choirs. The Cathedral is the focal point for our communal worship. All those working at the school in any capacity need to be in sympathy with its Christian tradition and ethos.

Elizabeth Cairncross
November 2010

“An inspiring education, set in a musically alive and beautiful environment, as a brilliant foundation for life.”